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“King of Samba”

University Park, Illinois, March 14, 2007 - All hail the King of Samba! Marlin Exton of Hazel Crest was recently awarded the dancing crown after a rigorous and vigorous competition in Chicago. The contest, hosted by Chicago Samba proved Exton has the moves and rhythm for the lively Brazilian dance.

“When I won, I was told I had ‘samba no pe.’ It means I have samba in my feet. I felt the music,” says Exton.

Chicago Samba is a Chicago-based group and school that performs nationally and gives lessons locally.

“I am one of many people taking lessons. Samba is a very popular dance in Brazil and is growing in popularity here. I developed a deep passion for the samba so in addition to lessons, I practice a lot on my own,” added Exton. Practice sessions usually take place with his wife, Vanyette, who also enjoys the dance, but who did not compete for the queen’s crown.

Exton’s interest in the samba and Brazilian culture began when he formed Mosaic, an international music group at Governors State University in University Park. As a capital program and facility operator, Exton meets many students, professors, and fellow staff members from different parts of the world.

“I have always loved music of all kinds and meeting all these talented people from different parts of the world gave me the idea to bring them together to create international music.”

Over the years, Mosaic has included performers from Japan, Scotland, India, China, Mexico, the United States, Canada, and Brazil. They have performed at university events, community venues, and in Chicago.

“One of our group’s members, Professor Maristella Zell, is from Sao Paulo, Brazil. She introduced me to a Brazilian music that is being played in Chicago. I was amazed when I first saw the samba danced and heard the music.”

For two years, Exton has taken lessons, practiced, and competed regularly.

“I made Brazilian friends who are also Carnivale dancers and just kept dancing. I won four different contests and took lessons at the Dance Center of Chicago. My teacher is the great dancer and performer Edilson Lima.”

As the King of Samba, Exton was given his own special costume to wear when he dances and will perform with Chicago Samba at neighborhood and community events throughout the city during his yearlong reign.

“I am very glad to be the king. I give a lot of credit to my teacher and the fact that I love the music so much. It is so much fun and gratifying to be accepted. It also keeps me fit and nimble.”